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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001285

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STATE FOR EUR/WE, EUR/RPM, ISN AND H

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2019
TAGS: [MNUC](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BE](#)
SUBJECT: BELGIAN LEGISLATORS WRITE TO URGE U.S. CONGRESS TO
END DEPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN BELGIUM

REF: BRUSSELS 1040

Classified By: Political Economic Counselor Richard Eason, reason 1.4(d
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¶1. (U) On September 21, nine members of the Belgian parliament sent a letter to U.S. Representatives Ed Pastor and Rodney Frelinghuysen, and Senators Byron Dorgan and Michael Bennet, urging them to end deployment of the B61 nuclear weapon. The text of the letter follows para 4.

¶2. (C) One statement in the Belgian parliamentarians' letter, that "in Belgium there is a wide cross-party political consensus that the deployment of B61 nuclear weapons would best be ended", is exaggerated. The signatories come from five of the 11 parties in Parliament (francophone Socialist, Flemish Socialist, Ecolo, Groen! and Open VLD, who hold 93 of the 221 seats in the House of Representatives and Senate combined). However, they can best be described as individual members who see a political advantage in an outspoken opposition to nuclear weapons on Belgian soil and in the world. They have been encouraged to become more active by the approach of the 2010 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference. One of them is Philippe Mahoux, who has promised to present a bill to ban nuclear weapons from Belgian territory altogether. While Mahoux's bill will engender debate on the issue of Belgium's role in NATO's nuclear mission, it is not expected to pass or possibly even come to a vote in Parliament. Ludwig Vandenhove, Chairman of the House of Representative's defense committee, who signed the letter along with Mahoux, recently told Poloff that he did not expect the bill to become law. Belgian government officials have told us they do not intend to give Mahoux's initiative any government support (reftel).

¶3. (U) Post suggests that congressional liaison officers in H Bureau may want to urge the U.S. legislators receiving the letter to inform their Belgian counterparts of President Obama's commitment to achieving a nuclear-free world, as expressed in his Prague speech, and also to urge them to support multilateral discussions of disarmament within the context of NATO and the NPT, aimed at balanced reductions in weaponry, rather than taking unilateral action on their own.

¶4. (U) Begin text of letter:

Dear Senator/Representative

Through press reports we noticed the discussion on the modernization of the B61 nuclear weapons, more specifically the B61 Phase 6.2/2A 'Refurbishment' Study. We also noticed this modernization is presented as needed to accomplish the US obligations toward its European allies and their expectations towards the US extended deterrence. As members of the Belgian parliament we like to put into question this presentation of the opinions concerning the US extended deterrence in Europe.

Already in its Strategic Concept of 1999 NATO considered "The circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated by them are therefore extremely remot." We consider further deployment of B61 nuclear weapons as of no military value. All deterrence roles considered for the B61 tactical nuclear weapons in the actual circumstances can be accomplished by conventional military means. The further deployment of the B61 is a waste of resources for both the US and Belgian air force.

The remaining B61 weapons are also presented as bargaining tool for the much larger amount of Russian nuclear weapons. In our opinion the continuing deployment of the B61 rather gives Russia an excuse to keep its tactical nuclear weapons deployed. Bold nuclear disarmament steps, like proposing a No First Use-treaty, will be more important incentives to bring Russia to the negotiation table than keeping B61's in Europe.

In Belgium there is a wide cross-party political consensus that the deployment of B61 nuclear weapons would best be ended. This opinion was expressed in resolutions of the Belgian Senate of 21 April 2005 and the Belgian Chambre of 13 July 2005, and was confirmed in several later resolutions like the Senate resolution of 29 January 2009.

Fully respecting the autonomy of your decision making on this issue, we hope with this letter to have aided you in making an informed decision.

Yours Sincerely,

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Marleen Temmerman, Senator, Chairman of the Committee for External relations and Defence (Senate)

Patrik Vankrunkelsven, Senator, Chairman of the Committee for Justice (Senate)

Benoit Hellings, Senator

Philippe Mahoux, Senator

Geert Lambert, Senator

Dirk Van der Maelen, Vice-president of the House of Representatives

Ludwig Vandenbroucke, Chairman of the Committee for Defence (House of Representatives)

Juliette Boulet, Member of Parliament

Wouter De Vriendt, Member of Parliament

End Text.

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